**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 4th October 2020**

**Bear each other’s burdens**

He ain’t heavy, he my brother’. St Paul urges us to respond with sibling love to another’s tribulation. We are all brothers and sisters of the one heavenly Father. There is no room in Christian life for abandoning those less fortunate than ourselves; in fact, Christ exhorts us to pick up the load that may cause us pain. But we will be changed, liberated by the experience.

*Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

In Zone A, the education of children is top priority. A lack of finances causes many students to drop out of school. MU’s support ‘eases the burden in their family and also gives the children moral support … and better access to jobs’ - and fulfils the law of Christ.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 11th October 2020**

**Captivity**

The precautions put in place to curb the spread of the deadly coronavirus pandemic have given many of us an experience of captivity. For some there have been opportunities for creativity and reaching out to neighbours and those less fortunate. For others resentment, frustration and fear are uppermost. When we are captive to such negative impulses we close the door to our inner resources and, most importantly, to God. Seek O seek the Lord, while he is near. Trust him, speak to him in prayer and he will hear. TiS 464

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” Psalm 126:1-2*

For those living in the captivity of loneliness, a member in the diocese of Derry and Raphoe, All Ireland, began a Widows’ Friendship Group. She ran monthly meetings in her own home until the age of 90. Then her ministry was taken up by Cathedral House. Now transport, refreshments and helpers support those who are lonely.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 18th October 2020**

**Deprivation**

 Hope must surely be the ultimate deprivation: no hope for the future, no assurance of love, friendship, or fulfilling relationships and no resurrection hope. Life in these circumstances breeds mindless shopping at best and destruction of others’ lives at worst. St Paul wrote that ‘by hope were we saved’, and so, if saved, let us bring to mind’s eye and heart’s care all those deprived of hope. May we rise to any opportunity to provide help and hope.

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbour, “Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it”, when you have it with you. Proverbs 3: 27-28*

Female prisoners in Durham were lacking direction and hope. The local Mothers’ Union were approached by the prison warden and members set up a MU branch there. With backing from the prison chaplain, they meet monthly and have gathered 15 new members. Their unconditional love and concern have given the women hope for the future.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 25th October 2020**

**Celebrating the people of God**

The world is bright with the joyous saints / Who love to do Jesus’ will/ You can meet them in school, or in lanes or at sea,/ in church or in trains, or in shops, or at tea/ for the saints of God are just folk like me,/ And I mean to be one too. This hymn by Lesbia Scott is available in an absolutely delightful edition illustrated by Judith Gwyn Brown. I Sing a Song of the Saints of God. Moorehouse Publishing 1991. Includes music.

*[God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1: 4-6*

The MU saints in the diocese of Glasgow and Galloway collaborated with Women’s Aid and the Field Study Centre in providing a 48-hour country trip for seven single-mum families affected by domestic violence. For these two days they were in peace and safety, practiced outdoor skills and had fun with new friends. We can celebrate the saintly witness which left them all feeling stronger and with a positive outlook for their future.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 1st November 2020**

 **International issues**

He’s got the whole world in his hands. This notion of theological genius is expounded in the Hebrew scriptures and was confirmed by the inclusive ministry of Jesus Christ. His hands reached out to heal and embrace any who came to him. His voice called out to the dispossessed, the outcasts from his own society and culture. May we also have a wide vision of our Christian responsibility.

*He shall judge between the nations,  and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,   and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:4*

The central opening of Families Worldwide has a map of the world flagging 4 million members around the world. The majority of countries once belonged to the British Empire. Out of God’s great mercy the colonial past has been (in part) reborn under the tender care and encouragement of Mothers’ Union and its foundation in prayer.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 8th November 2020**

**Memories**

‘Count your blessings’: do you remember to? Are you, perhaps, dealing with memories you would rather forget? Sometimes these memories do need to be faced. Perhaps you can see now that the criticism was kindly meant; perhaps being overlooked for one position opened another way. Reflecting on the past can bring us to understand ourselves and forgive others. Count on it.

*I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. Psalm 77:11-12*

In Wales, having studied MULOA, members are looking at what they have been doing for a long time in a new way. Despite facing the challenge of lack of transport and the need for leadership training, projects involving in the local community are having a profound impact on people in hospital or prison or the homeless. Blessed memories for the future.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 15th November 2020**

**Power of prayer**

What is the power in prayer? It surely isn’t force given so that we can make others do what we want (even supposing our intentions are honourable, even altruistic). The writer of the Letter to the Philippians associates it with the Peace of God. Perhaps it is rather that trust (don’t worry) and thanksgiving (counting blessings) bring us into the state of Peace, which is Prayer. Being in a prayerful peace is power that we need to give, to forgive, and indeed, to love the unlovable.

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4: 6-7*

In the diocese of Canterbury UK, the impact of MULOA has awakened members to trust in God and to engage with church membership so that both are involved in local initiatives. Helping outfit a girl starting secondary school has had an impact on her whole family. Everyone was enriched by the power of prayer. Praise the Lord.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 22nd November 2020**

**Gender Justice**

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1.27

In the Anglican Communion we are committed to ensuring that our churches become a living witness to our belief that women and men are equally made in the image of God.

Within the Communion and beyond, we recognise that the empowerment of women and men to live and work in just relationship requires a transformation among individuals and in all our communities. Statement and Bible verse copied from the Anglican Communion Website.

*For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light. Luke 8: 17*

Perhaps the greatest impact of the recent work of MU in Ireland has been raising awareness of gender-based violence. This has been achieved by helping the needy, elderly, prisoners and their families and all types of vulnerable people. Members hold annual services and events to support the 16 Days of Activism. May God bless their endeavours.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 29th November 2020**

**Season of Advent**

O Wisdom

dwelling in the womb of God,

generating and nurturing the earth,

through the nights of darkness,

come and cherish in us

the seed of wisdom.

*Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 2. From Prayer in the Morning, Cairns Publications 1989.*

*The people who walked in darkness   have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  on them light has shined. Isaiah 9:2*

Nurturing has had a great impact on those receiving support from members in Scotland. Released prisons no longer need to use paper to dry themselves. Members collected cloth towels to meet this pressing need and the recipients felt cherished indeed.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 6th December 2020**

**Proclamation**

O Living Word,

proceeding from the mouth of God,

penetrating to the ends of the earth,

come and pierce us,

with the sword of truth.

*Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 1. From Prayer in the Morning, Cairns Publications 1989.*

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” Isaiah 52: 7*

Improving communication and leadership development are priorities for members in the province of York, UK. May their voices and actions proclaim the Good News of Jesus’ love for all.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 13th December 2020**

**Journeying**

O Adonai

Ruler of ancient Israel, appearing to Moses

in the flame of the burning bush,

carving in him on Sinai the words of the living law,

come, etch your holy way even into the lines of our faces.

*Jim Cotter ‘Cries of Advent’ No 3. From Prayer in the Morning, Cairns Publications 1989*.

*A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isaiah 9:2*

The life’s journey of an 8 year-old girl in Eastern Cape South Africa was changed by the ministry (the holy way) of MU and the local municipality. Sibabalwe’s prosthetic leg brought her smiles, hope for the future and playtime with school friends.

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 20th December 2020**

**Nativity**

From virgin’s womb this Christmas day did spring

The precious seed that only saved man:

This day let man rejoice and sweetly sing

Since on this day salvation first began.

This day did Christ man’s soul from death remove,

With glorious saints to dwell in heav’n above.

This day to man came pledge of perfect peace:

This day to man came love and unity:

This day man’s grief began for to cease,

This day did man receive a remedy

For each offence and ev’ry deadly sin

That he, with guilty heart, has wandered in.

*‘A Carol for Christmas Day’ by Francis Kindlemarsh (fl. C. 1570) Verses 1-2. Tune 24 Orlando Gibbons*

*While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.  And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2: 6-7*

**Thought for the Week from Mothers Union Australia**

**Sunday 27th-31st December 2020**

**Rejoice and reflect**

Now in Christ’s flock let love be surely placed:

Now from Christ’s flock let concord hate expel:

Now of Christ’s flock let love be so embraced,

As we in Christ, and Christ in us may dwell.

Christ is the author of all unity,

From whence proceedeth all felicity.

O sing unto this glittering glorious King:

O praise his name let every living thing:

Let heart and voice like bells of silver ring

The comfort that this Christmas day did bring.

Let lute and harp, with sound of sweet delight

The joys of Christ’s birth on this day recite.

‘*A Carol for Christmas Day’ by Francis Kindlemarsh (fl. c. 1570) verses 3-4*

*But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2:19-20*